



# The Herb Age



JUNE/JULY 2023

NO 439



*When beetles fight these battles in a bottle with their paddles and the bottle's  
on a poodle and the poodle's eating noodles.. ...they call this a muddle puddle  
tweetle poodle beetle noodle bottle paddle battle.*

*Dr. Seuss*

## THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC

[www.herbsocietyvic.org.au](http://www.herbsocietyvic.org.au)



Like us on  
Facebook

[www.facebook.com/groups/4104516136342577](https://www.facebook.com/groups/4104516136342577)

Meetup group: [www.meetup.com/Herb-Society-of-Victoria/](https://www.meetup.com/Herb-Society-of-Victoria/)

### AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

- ☼ To act as a forum for all persons interested in herbs for their mutual benefit and fellowship.
- ☼ To further the education of the public in the use, value and growing of herbs.
- ☼ To promote and encourage the organic growing of herbal plants.

*Patron: Penny Woodward*

### HSOV COMMITTEE

<b>President</b>	Jan Illingworth
<b>Vice President</b>	Vacant
<b>Committee Secretary</b>	Vacant
<b>Treasurer</b>	Carmen Hollway
<b>The Herb Age Editor</b>	Vacant
<b>(Acting)</b>	Meridith Hutchinson
<b>Membership Officer</b>	Marie Baker
<b>Committee</b>	June Valentine
<b>Committee</b>	Nigel Holmes

*The committee would appreciate your help. Please speak to one of them about how you can join the committee.*

The Herb Society of Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we join together and pay respects to Elders past, present and yet to emerge.

### HSOV MONTHLY EVENTS

HSOV meets on the first Thursday evening of every month, from February to December. Monthly events often feature a guest speaker, mini-talks or event theme, like a picnic or trivia, and followed by herb refreshments.

Monthly events are held at:

- **Room MB10 Main Building**
- Burnley campus of Melbourne University (was Burnley Horticultural College)
- 500 Yarra Blvd Richmond
- Enter MB building from the main entrance
- **Room is open 7.00pm for 7.30pm start**

Parking inside the grounds is often limited. There is ample parking on Yarra Boulevard, which is free after hours. Public transport access is nearby.

**Next Meeting Details: See Page 4**

### HSOV DETAILS

ABN 22 261 579 261

PO Box 396, Camberwell,  
Victoria, 3124, Australia

Bank Details to deposit payments, including membership renewals:  
BSB 633000 / Account 158914432

Membership can also be paid via Try Booking link:  
[www.trybooking.com/CHUGD](http://www.trybooking.com/CHUGD)

<b>Advertising Rates</b>	Quarter page	\$15.00	Half page	\$25.00	Full page	\$45.00
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Payment should be sent to the Treasurer at the Society's address above. Advertising copy to be sent to the Editor by page 3 deadline dates.

## THE HERB AGE

*Official Newsletter of the  
Herb Society of Victoria*

Six issues published per  
year, covering:

- ☼ February/March
- ☼ April/May
- ☼ June/July
- ☼ August/September
- ☼ October/November
- ☼ December

Members' original  
contributions are warmly  
welcomed.

### Post to:

Meridith Hutchinson  
The Editor, The Herb Age  
PO Box 396  
Camberwell Vic 3124

### Email to

[theherbage@outlook.com](mailto:theherbage@outlook.com)

### Deadline for next issue:

Emailed and posted articles

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023

The views expressed by the  
contributors to this newsletter  
are not necessarily those of the  
Editor or of the Committee of  
the Herb Society of Victoria,  
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## THE HERB AGE

JUNE/JULY 2023

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### Cover Photos and Quote:

The cover photos (and below and on the next events page) are by our guest  
speaker for July, Wendy Clark, speaking of 'Small Creatures in the Garden'.  
These amazing photos give you a small taste of the beauty of our garden's wee  
creatures. They have come from the gallery on her website from  
[masteryourcamera.com.au](http://masteryourcamera.com.au).

The silly beetle quote from Dr Suess made me laugh and I hope it did you too!





## *Our Next Events*

Burnley Horticultural College Campus  
and Gardens, Burnley Room MB10

Parking inside the grounds is limited so, if possible  
please park on Yarra Blvd and walk in.



Please bring a plate for shared supper, herbs for tea or  
help out at the tea trolley at the end of the main event.

### *Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023*

*General Monthly Event*

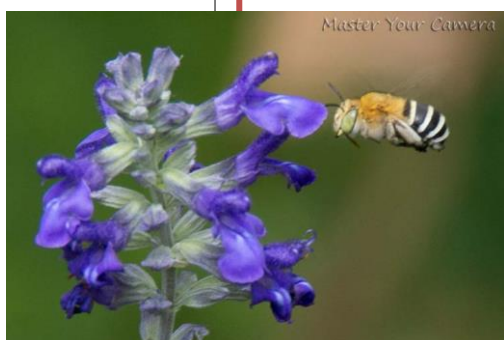
*Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start*

**Guest Speaker:** *Karen Sutherland*

**Topic:** *Native Herbs*

Karen Sutherland from 'Edible Eden' is a horticulturalist who consults and designs gardens for home harvest. She co-authored the book 'Tomato: Know, Sow, Grow, Feast' with Penny Woodward and Janice Sutton. Her own suburban garden is all about sustainability, with a huge variety of edibles; some exotics and especially indigenous plants with over 40 bush food plants.

HSOV had Karen booked to speak just as COVID forced a postponement, so we have been waiting a long time to see her again. Her last presentation to our group was fascinating. This is one not to be missed!



### *Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023*

*General Monthly Event*

*Please be seated 7.15 for 7.30 pm Start*

**Guest Speaker:** *Wendy Clark*

**Topic:** *Small creatures in the garden*

Wendy Clark is a Field Naturalist with a love of nature and is active in several garden clubs. Her particular passion is for invertebrates which she loves to photograph. Wendy is also a professional photographer, teaching photography through 'Master Your Camera'. Her presentation will help us to see the world through the smallest of eyes, those of the wee creatures in our gardens and forests.

## President's Report

I will try not to bang on about the weather, but isn't it numbingly cold? I did note that Saturday (May 6<sup>th</sup>) was naked gardening day, and I thought, well, I would freeze my ..... off! Now, on to a more respectable subject; compost, or compost, compost, compost as Craig Castree stated regularly in his talk at last Thursday's HSOV May event. He throws everything organic into his rotating compost and that is all he puts into his garden. So informative on soil and that we can save our backs and sweat by not turning the dirt at all so that the mycelium, bugs and bacteria can do their magic. This in turn encourages the worms which, if you have 25 worms per spade full, you are doing all right.

He will be talking on June 17<sup>th</sup> at the Gardeners Days out (see below), along with other guests including Karen Sutherland who is talking with us on our next June monthly event. Of course, you get to see these amazing speakers for free as a member of HSOV or \$5 for guests. We also have Wendy Clark coming to our July monthly event to speak on little creatures in our gardens. I could have used her amazing photography skills for my image of a flax flower, left that was teaming with parrots until I got too close.

Last month, I heard Karen talk at the Preston Garden Gala show which was very informative on native plants. Elsie also attended with her plants, while I had my famous teas alongside this enormous bulb stall as you can see from the photo, it went forever! They had 5 other shows on that day around Melbourne. All the rain about has not seemed to upset the garden (despite the mud) too much, actually it seemed to made the fruit and vegies bigger. The macadamia nuts seem twice their size. I have heaps of baby trees if anyone would like them, just let me know (email via [theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com](mailto:theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com)).

If anyone would like to join up with the lovely committee members with support, ideas and any skills to help with the running of the HSOV, we would all be enhanced. Hope to see you all next month, June 1<sup>st</sup>, for Karen Sutherland. Cheers

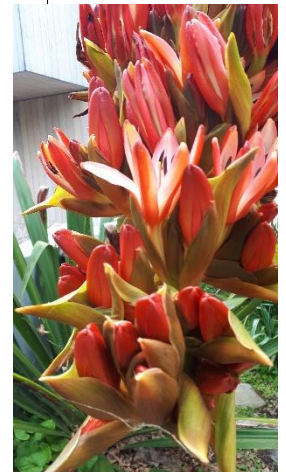
*Jan Illingworth, President*

## Gardener's Day Out

Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria, "Gardener's Day Out" is returning on Saturday 17 June at Deakin University Campus, Burwood, VIC, which also celebrates "The Royal's" 175<sup>th</sup> year.

Jane Edmanson OAM, Karen Sutherland, Attila Kapitany and Craig Castree come together to form a fantastic team of presenters. They, along with the great enthusiasm provided by your fellow gardeners, the plant stalls, and other activities will ensure an enjoyable day to remember. The venue has undercover parking and public transport access.

Cost is \$25 – book to guarantee a place. Lunch is available for \$20 but MUST be pre-ordered. To book or for more information go to their website [www.rhsv.org.au](http://www.rhsv.org.au), Facebook post on [www.facebook.com/royalhortsocvic](https://www.facebook.com/royalhortsocvic) or contact the Secretary at [plantzia@bigpond.com](mailto:plantzia@bigpond.com).



## ***HSOV Memberships Renewal 2023/2024***

### **Membership renewal is due on 1 July 2023**

Single membership fee which includes the *Herb Age* by email     \$26

Family membership fee which includes the *Herb Age* by email     \$34

Long standing members only who have previously elected to receive the *Herb Age* by post may continue to do so. The fee is:

Single membership (posted THA)                     \$38

Family membership (posted THA)                     \$48

### **Methods of payment**

The preferred methods of payment are **Trybooking** and **direct transfer of funds** into the bank. These methods provide an accurate record of your payment and reduce the labour involved for the committee in collecting the funds.

- **Payment using Trybooking**

<https://www.trybooking.com/CHUGD>

Click on the link above and you will be taken to the HSOV page where all the relevant information will be displayed. Payment is by credit or debit card and there is a 50 cent booking fee applicable.

- **Direct transfer of funds into HSOV bank account**

Name of account: The Herb Society of Victoria Inc.

BSB 633 000             Account number 158914432

Please **add your name to the reference field** so that your remittance can be identified.

Other methods of payment are:

- Payment by cheque  
Post to:             The Herb Age of Victoria PO Box 396 Camberwell Vic 3123  
Please include your name so that your payment can be correctly identified.
- Payment with cash at the HSOV monthly event.

It is not necessary for members to fill out a renewal form. However, please inform us of any change in your details by the following methods:

- By email to: [herbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com](mailto:herbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com) or
- By post to the above address

Any queries in regard to the renewal process can be sent to the email address above to Marie Baker.

Please note that members who joined the society from February 2023 are not required to renew at this time. Membership will be current until 30 June 2024.

Payment before 31 July would be appreciated.

*Marie Baker, Membership Officer*



# **Welcome to our New Members**

The Herb Society of Victoria would like to welcome to our newest members and look forward to seeing you soon at a monthly event or other HSOV event.

Mary Hollingsworth  
Paula Mackie  
Katherine Behrend (Welcome Back)

*Marie Baker, Membership Officer*

## ***The Herb Age Email Updates***

For some time, we have been moving away from printing the newsletter and moving towards sending an email version to members.

### **Reasons are:**

- **Financial Cost** – the cost to print and post out each copy is continually rising, whereas the cost of emailing copies out stays the same (nothing - just our time!).
- **Environmental Cost** – paper, print and postal transportation all have costs to the environment and are severally reduced with the email version.
- **Time** – The cut off for articles and information into the Herb Age is generally 3 or 4 weeks before the meeting, to allow time for production, printing, labelling and post. This makes any changes close to events difficult to disseminate sometimes. With email, we can reduce the lead time and it is easier to send updates as necessary.

### **Changes already in place:**

- New members only receive The Herb Age via email (unless there are special circumstances and approved by the committee)
- Complimentary copies of the Herb Age (ie to other Herb Societies and the State Library) are sent via email
- The Herb Age, including back issues, is also available under the 'Members' section of the HerbSocietyofVic.com website. The only difference is that the web version does not show members' personal contact information.

### **New changes**

- All members who have provided an email address will now receive an email version of the Herb Age, even if you also currently receive a printed copy. If you receive both, please look at the benefits in the email version and consider moving to that only.

### **What you can do.**

- If you already have an email subscription, simply renew.
- If you have a printed Herb Age subscription, please try the email version and renew with an email subscription, if possible.

As above, we do appreciate that some of our members cannot receive their Herb Age via email and we will continue to provide the printed version in this case.

Thank so much to all members for your continued support of the Herb Society.



## *Vale Phillip Lynch*

The committee was saddened to hear recently of the sudden and unexpected death of Phillip Lynch on 28 April 2023. Most of you will not have heard of Phill or his mother, Undine Lynch. Undine died in 1984, so was obviously a very early member of the Herb Society or perhaps even a foundation member.

Phill was an honorary member of the Herb Society. It would appear that he was co-opted into assisting the Society as it made its first steps into the digital age. Meridith found a reference in Issue 45 of The Herb Age (THA) June 1984 in which various aspects of the circulation of THA are discussed, including the printing of the labels. *'Phillip Lynch, son of a member, who is doing this for us now.'*

In fact, Phill did a lot more than print the labels. Using his computer programming skills, he designed a program which included a database where members' details were recorded. Using that information, Phill could print out labels for the postal copy and send out the email copies of THA as was appropriate for each member. As information processing support has progressed over the years, it is possible now to purchase suitable software for these tasks, but forty years ago that was not an option. Phill continued to refine and update his system over recent years, and he left a system in place that we can continue to use, along with some more modern methods.

As membership officer, I liaised with Phill as required when he put updates into place and as each issue of THA came up for circulation. He was a busy man, and not always easy to get hold of. He had mentioned to me that he worked voluntarily in assisting the digitally challenged with their computer skills. Most of us will appreciate how grateful we are to have someone to assist in this new world of technology! And he was that 'someone.'

However, once an appointment was made, he was ever courteous and patient and acted in good humour as we carried out the required tasks. I never actually met him, but a few of our members did so, including June Valentine, who collected the labels from him in recent times, and as would many other members have done so in past times.

It is a remarkable achievement to have volunteered for an organization for 40 years or more, especially when doing so in memory to a loved one. The Herb Society owes a great debt of gratitude to Phill. We extend our warmest condolences to Phillip's wife Judith, his daughters Amanda and Tracy and his extended family.

*Marie Baker*



## *Sad Announcement – Jill Bryant*

It is with great sadness, that we announce the passing of a much loved and long-time member of the Herb Society of Victoria, Jill Bryant, on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup>. Only a few months ago, we held a tribute to Jill for the vast amount she contributed during 38 years' service as a committee member. This notice is as Herb Age is about to go to print for this issue and we will dedicate some space in the next issue for Vale. We expect many people may wish to add their memories and wishes, please see page 3 for the Herb Age closing date and how to send.



## Wanted: Committee Secretary

Are you well organised, enjoy meeting with others and able to write up key points? Then we have the role for you.

The Committee Secretary role has been vacant this year, with Graham continuing to do the duties until recently, making off on a long and well deserved holiday. Thank you so much Graham, having filled the Secretary role for many years previously and then coming back again the last few years to help out a second time (as well as many other contributions you've made to the committee and HSOV in general).

However, that leaves a big gap in the committee and you may be just the person for the job. The Secretary is the President's right arm person, maintaining correspondence, helping to prepare the agenda and writing up the minutes for committee meetings and the AGM. You'll find the committee are a very friendly bunch and more than happy to share their vast experience.

Please talk to or email our President Jan Illingworth about what you can add to the Herb Society through this role. Send an email to [theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com](mailto:theherbsocietyofvictoria@gmail.com) or see contact details for all the committee on the inside front page.

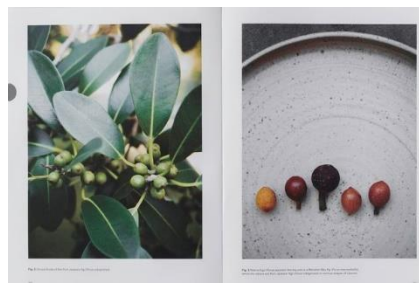
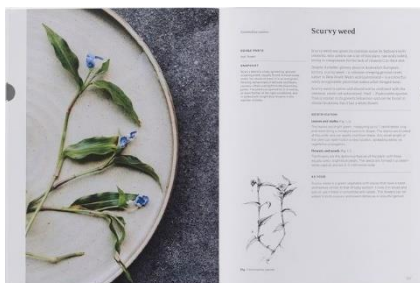
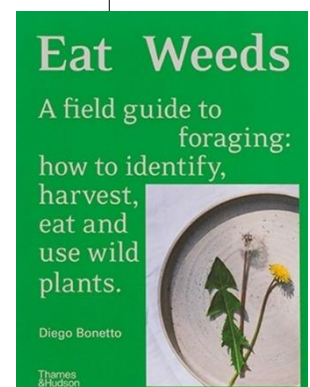


## Book Review: Eat Weeds

This interestingly bound, hard cover book is full of artistic photos and illustrations that has favs from Costa in the foreword. Diego Bonetto is the progeny of Italian parents who utilised everything in their back yard and around. He has numerous edible plants, that others call weeds, categorised into their habitat areas and after describing them will have its use and recipes. This is a very enjoyable, informative and knowledgeable book that could move from one's coffee table to bedside table with ease. Eat your weeds!

*Jan Illingworth*

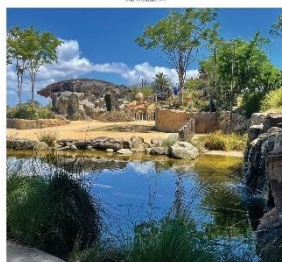
**Eat Weeds** by Diego Bonetto  
Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2022



*Ed Note: I'm sure Jan will not mind me saying that she is a great weed lover! And why not take advantage of all that free food out there, AND diminish introduced plants that are crowding out indigenous ones. You've seen the talk from Jan on eating weeds (April 2022). You've done the walk along Merri Creek to find and eat the weeds (April 2022 and Oct 2022, as follow up after the Herb Conference). Now read all about it with this book to inspire you even more. There have been a number of delicious recipes in previous Herb Ages that you can source on the website. Login under the Members area to find old The Herb Age issues.*

## Our Gardens

Published by The Garden Clubs of Australia



# Garden Clubs of Australia

The Garden Clubs of Australia took advantage of the Melbourne Garden and Flower Show as an opportunity for the GCA committee, from around the nation to meet in Melbourne. They also invited representatives from the affiliated Garden Clubs in Victoria to a meet and greet function at the Hotel Chancellor on Thursday 30 March. As a member of the GCA, the Herb Society of Vic is provided service, including access to club insurance and a quarterly magazine 'Our Gardens'. The magazine is available to all members of HSOV, so please ask at the next meeting, or even better, drop an email to borrow a copy. There were surprisingly only a few clubs present, which must have been a disappointment for them, but they were very welcoming and friendly and it was a wonderful evening.

HSOV President, Jan Illingworth and myself represented HSOV at the event, 'networking' with the CGA and other clubs, helped along with very moreish canapes and wine. A tough gig, but someone had to do it! We had a very interesting chat with members from the Mediterranean Garden Society, which is actually an international society with branches around the planet including a few states in Australia. There are numerous traditional herbs and useful plants, native to the Mediterranean region such as thyme, rosemary and olive. The society also focuses on all plants appropriate for the Mediterranean climate and soil type, so many Australian indigenous plants fit perfectly and are used in their own gardens. But I digress (gosh, happens so easily!).

The GCA function was held to raise awareness for clubs in Victoria about:

- Long time representative in Victoria, Paul Lucas has retired. Paul has spoken at the HSOV a couple of times, as recently as September last year. The Garden Clubs Australia are looking for a new representative in Victoria. Their motto is 'Friendship through Gardens' and indeed, they are a very friendly group, committed to providing services for all affiliated garden clubs.
- The GCA National Gardening Week 2023 is coming up and will be held over 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October. Jan and I were able to help with suggestions to promote the week, fresh from having promoted the Herb Conference last year. They have provided ideas to celebrate the week which are on their website [gardenclubs.org.au/national-gardening-week](https://gardenclubs.org.au/national-gardening-week)

Many thanks to the Garden Clubs of Australia for the wonderful opportunity to meet and for the dedicated service they provide to clubs all around the country. Please consider joining their committee to represent Victoria by emailing [svdirectorzones@gardenclubs.org.au](mailto:svdirectorzones@gardenclubs.org.au) - Jan Ball, the Director of Zones at GCA.

*Meridith Hutchinson*

## What Spice am I?



- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 5 points | I'm the seed from a tree of the Spice Islands (Indonesia)                      |
| 4 points | I have strong medicinal properties, for digestion, oral and skin health        |
| 3 points | My flavour is warming and slightly sweet, used in powder or grated form.       |
| 2 points | I lift many foods – meat, vegies, especially baked goods, puddings and eggnog. |
| 1 point  | While I am the seed, the seed covering is called Mace                          |

I am

— — — — —

Answer Page 15

# *Herb Conference*

## Overview of Presentations Part 3

### Dr Chris Williams – Aquatic Edibles

Chris entered the hall with a trolley filled with buckets and draping greenery. His style is very hands on and his knowledge enormous. As a lecturer at Burnley, he is involved with the student crops and he discussed how that has been growing (all pun intended) over the years. His interest is in food production in urban spaces. He's also greatly involved in outreach programs to community and public council gardens. For example, council parks growing sweet potatoes as vibrant ground covers for the garden in summer and harvested for the local food bank.

Chris deploys his own backyard as an extension of his testing lab to try different crops, especially edible aquatics. He had many photos from his own garden, where he has deployed simple containers for growing like foam boxes or plastic tubs. His aim is to provide methods so everyone can all easily and cheaply grow sustainable foods. While we often associate edible aquatic plants with warm climates, many are suitable for cooler Victoria. These are just a few of the ones he covered.



- **Water Chestnut** - can successfully be grown here in a bucket with no drainage. Grow in full sun and harvest rhizomes in autumn
- **Taro** –large plant, grows very well in boggy soil and copes with frost. Corms and young leaves can be cooked with coconut milk; must be well cooked to destroy calcium oxalate crystals.
- **Lotus** (sacred) *Nelumbo nucifera* – easy to grow in water with a beautiful flower. It is native to northern Australia, as well as Asia. The rhizome is edible, used in Asian cooking. The fresh seeds can be peeled and eaten raw. Dried seeds are often eaten in India. The leaves are used to wrap food for cooking.
- **Kangkong** *Ipomoea aquatica* – green that tastes a bit like broccoli. Can be bought in Asia supermarkets and easily grown from cuttings over summer (winter is too cold). Grow aquatic or in very moist soil.
- **Konjac** – Japanese aquatic. Corms are used to make GF noodles. Easy to propagate and can be can in moist soil in shady spot.
- **Bullrush** – an indigenous plant and important food source, bulbs are eaten.
- **Apios or American groundnut** – in the pea family with gorgeous flowers in autumn. The tubers are edible, cook like potatoes. Very tolerant of wet soil and likes semi shade.
- **Fish Mint** *Houttuynia cordata* – smells and taste like fish. The smell goes when cooked. Easy to strike from cuttings. Used medicinally for coughs.
- **Lemongrass** – can be grown semi-aquatic over summer. There is also an indigenous variety



At the end of this fascinating presentation, Chris offered the trolley of plants and cuttings to anyone who would like to take them home to grow themselves. Many inspired souls came forward to collect a few goodies to start their own aquatic gardens.

*Meridith Hutchinson*



## *Tussie Mussie Workshop*

We had about 20 people turn up to the Tussie Mussie workshop on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

A tussie mussie is a kind of posie or nosegay – usually 6 inches or less across and they have a long history, still being used with the royal family. In Elizabethan times, they used perfumed flowers and herbs to wear pinned on their chest or held close to the nose in the unsanitary streets of cities.

The flowers you used in them had a language, but personally, I think knowing that could really restrict your creativity – for instance – can you guess what thistles can mean? I really like thistle flowers and sea holly! Or what if you want to convey a message but your flower is out of season?

The session was held indoors on one long length of tables pushed together and stretching across the room. There was a profusion of plant materials for us to choose from arranged down the length of this table, brought by the organisers and participants. Some unusual ones were camelias with the reddish fruit attached, rose hips, Celosia with magenta leaves and feathery flower heads and pale fuzzy dusty miller leaves. Some of this plant material came from Burnley gardens as the HSOV had permission to gather from their Herb Garden. Burnley Gardens is lovely at any time of year.



Meridith and Beverly were facilitating and showing us their traditional methods. They had learned from mutual friends and Meredith had also learned from her mother. They start the tussie mussie with a central focus – usually a flower and build out from that - moving the tussie mussie round and round as material is added. Personally, I had difficulty keeping my focal point flowers in the centre – a few others were having the same issue – they kept working their way out towards the edge... as you get to the outside of the tussie mussie, more green material is added to frame it and also as a sort of cushion to keep delicate flowers supported. Traditionally, it has a flattish top, but delicate sprigs of flowers or foliage can poke up. They were then secured with a rubber band, trimmed flat on the bottom of the stems, and placed in water. To take them home, we put moistened kitchen paper around the stems and covered that with aluminium foil, and we could use a paper doily around that if we wished.

Aesthetically, an interesting suggestion they made was to add flowers and other materials in odd groups of 3, or 5 usually, because adding in even numbers results in a blocky look.



Beverley showed some unusual tussie mussies she had made – there was a dry one from years ago that she had hung upside down to dry out. It had round poppy and nigella seed heads and some quaking grass seed heads with bay leaves around the base. She also made a colourful culinary tussie mussie with a central onion, chilies and rosemary sprigs.

It was a lovely experience – wandering up and down the table chatting, finding something that caught your eye and incorporating it – a very satisfying, creative experience.

Thanks to Meredith, Beverley and the HSOV for organising it.

Dictionary of plant meaning in tussie mussies link below. Imagine giving a tussie mussie message to someone – you would then have to hand them a copy of the dictionary to go with it and a plant identification book. It won't be much use to you if you are colour blind either.

Have a look at this extensive list. <https://bleualchemy.com/tussie-mussie/tussie-mussie/>

*Marina Bistrin*



*Ed Note: Was a fun day and so great to see some new faces. Thanks Marina and to all those who attended, especially to Beverley Narandja. I have to thank Lesley Northey too for allowing me to raid her garden for flowers, and to the staff at Burnley who allowed us access to the room and to pick flowers in the Herb Garden. I wish the weather had been a bit more predictable to sit outside, next to the Herb Garden for easy top ups! Thank you for the follow up messages, especially where you've been making them for friends and loved ones.*

*So don't be shy now; make some Tussie Mussies to bring along to the Herb Society monthly events. We always give one to our Guest speakers and pop them in the raffle if possible. As much as I love making them, my garden doesn't produce enough flowers (hence raiding Lesley's garden) and it would be great to have diversity with other people making them for our meetings.*



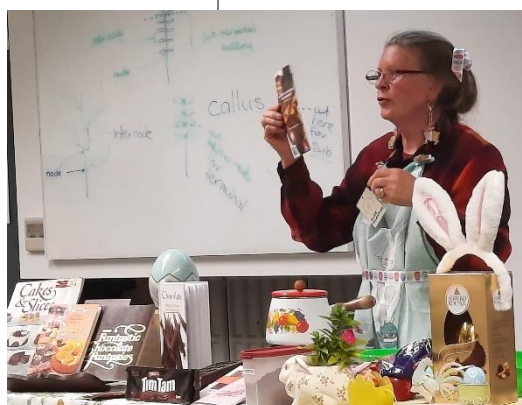
## Chocolate Delight



April's meeting saw another delightful presentation from June Valentine, this time on Chocolate and very appropriate on Easter eve. June's research into the topic really shone through as it was packed full with more information than nuts in a Snickers bar! The slides created in collaboration with her hubby, David, provided the visual prompts and a good dose of humour.

Chocolate is made from beans of the Cocoa tree which originates from South America, where it was traded at least 1500 years ago by the Mayans. Cocoa beans were highly prized – just 3 beans could buy a fish for dinner. The word 'chocolate' comes from the indigenous language meaning 'Bitter Water' and if you've ever had a cocoa bean or 95% cocoa chocolate, that makes sense, as it is naturally bitter. Most chocolate on sale now is packed with sugar for sweetness.

The invading Spanish quickly saw the value of the cocoa beans, sending beans and the recipe to prepare them back to Spain under great secrecy. The trees require a warm tropical climate and the Spanish began plantations on other Equatorial territories for easier trade. Once the Dutch invaded those territories, the Spanish lost their monopoly. But in those times, chocolate was never eaten; it was only served as a drink, and an expensive drink for the very wealthy, where it was also touted as an aphrodisiac.



In the early to mid-1800's, the industrial era brought experimentation with marketing chocolate to world. June delved further into the fascinating history of the world's most loved sweet and the famous names behind the labels. Bourneville believed it a healthy alternative to alcohol and partitioned to have the heavy tax on it reduced to make it accessible to the common man. Quakers - Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry already had huge factories, when a very young Milton Hershey started as an apprentice caramel maker. As cocoa and sugar became more affordable and new methods of making innovated products developed, chocolate as we know began to take the world by storm.

The tree produces about 20 to 30 pods a year, each pod has about 20 beans, which must be removed at the right time, fermented and dried. About 70% of the world's beans are grown in Africa in the Ivory coast and Ghana. Reasonable pay for the hard workers of this raw product can be only be guaranteed when buying 'Fair Trade' chocolate. Six multinational companies have 80% of the world's market.

June discussed the process of preparing the beans, and making chocolate, which is incredibly complicated. Good quality chocolate depends of a number of factors including (but not only), the beans roasting temperature, the cocoa butter content and the length of time of the 'conching', one of the final processes where the chocolate is blended and smoothed. This process is time consuming (up to 72 hours) and therefore expensive. Less conching means cheaper, but less pleasant, chocolate.



A small amount (30 grams a day) of good quality dark chocolate has been said to have surprising health benefits. Research suggests it can lower stress and heart disease and increase endorphins, which explains why we love it so much (😊)!



June had an Easter and chocolate inspired display with books, bunnies, eggs and even a fondue set. I have some fun dinner party memories with chocolate fondue, dipping strawberries into the warm, silky sweet brown liquid and trying to stop them falling off the stick into the pot. To top it off, we had a taste test comparison of dark chocolate by cocoa percentages. Thankyou June (and David) for a very informative and interesting insight of this ubiquitous treat.

*Meridith Hutchinson*

## *Lemon Balm; Melissa officinalis*

An aromatic labiatae family herb that is fairly hardy, though I have found that it prefers not to dry out too much, but it is said to like free draining soil. Has a spreading habit with shallow roots and prefers partial shade. The leaves are crinkly and similar to its cousin Mint but are strongly lemon-scented.

The flowers are like all of its cousins; small, white and insignificant until one gets up close to view their complexity and their nectar-laden are a magnet for bees, hence Lemon Balm's other name Bee Balm. Except for thrip at the end of the season, Lemon Balm is resistant to disease. Can be used fresh, but is easy to dry, cutting the stalks off just as it is flowering to put in a cool, dark, dry place on cotton is best.



Medicinally, Lemon Balm has been a valued nerve tonic for any melancholy, neuralgia, failing memory, headache and insomnia. Making a tea of dried leaves it can be added with Feverfew and Meadowsweet for headache or for insomnia combine Lemon Balm with Hops, Valerian and Chamomile. Memory loss, add Ginkgo Biloba and Brahmi. Lemon Balm adds a better taste, especially with bitter herbs. Like many of the other labiataes',

Lemon Balm is antiviral and can bring down fever and if a cool tea is dabbed on cold sores, can reduce the pain and longevity. An antiviral and fever Oxyeml is a jar packed with Lemon Balm, adding a heaped spoon of honey, ginger & garlic pulp. Top with vodka or similar, shake regularly for a month, take a tsp every 4 hours at the first sign of fever or flu.

Culinary uses; A handful of freshly chopped leaves can be added to a dressing mix or herb butter to apply to fish, chicken, pork and vegetables. Add a tablespoon of finally chopped fresh herb to your favourite muffin, shortbread or biscuit recipe and the German make a Bundt cake that is a standard sponge with a ¼ cup of herb and baked in a tube tin (with corrugations) and then a Lemon Balm and honey water is drizzled over the cooling cake. Delish

*Jan Illingworth*

*Ed Note: Lemon Balm makes a fabulous tea, as you may well know it is a favourite, made with fresh cuttings, at our warm weather HSOV monthly events. It also dries very well for use over the winter months. The fact that it's good for you really is a bonus!*

What Spice am I?

Answer : Nutmeg (Myristica fragrans)



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The Herb Age

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*Gentle Reminder...Memberships are due 1<sup>st</sup> July .....Happy Herbing ☺*